

AN EARLY ROMAN CHANCEL ARRANGEMENT AND ITS LITURGICAL FUNCTIONS

The excavations in recent years at S. Marco and S. Pietro in Vincoli have brought to light two examples of an early Roman chancel arrangement. At S. Marco¹ this consisted of a pair of parallel walls about 1.40 m. in height enclosing a passageway reaching about two thirds the length of the nave. This "kind of *dromos* or *solea*", as Krautheimer refers to it, was erected in two stages, the second somewhat narrower than the first (2.90 against 3.55 m.). From this passageway another pair of walls reached out toward the aisles as if to enclose a reserved area either side of the sanctuary. Though these wing walls are not in evidence at S. Pietro in Vincoli², the long passageway is remarkably like that in S. Marco, erected in two successively narrower stages and reaching two thirds the length of the nave. At S. Pietro this arrangement seems to belong to the church which was dedicated in 439-440. At S. Marco the arrangement is not directly datable; but since the pavement is about half way between the fourth- and ninth-century levels, it can be fixed roughly between 550 and 650.

These two examples of this arrangement are by no means unique. Both elements, the passageway down the nave and the wing walls reserving an area either side of the sanctuary, appear in other churches as well. At S. Clemente the rosette pavement in the lower church indicates that the original lay-out of the chancel consisted of a short rectangular sanctuary before the apse,

¹ A. FERRUA, *La basilica del papa Marco: Civiltà Cattolica*, XCIX, 3 (1948) 503-513; *Id.*, *RAC*, XXV (1949) 14-17; *Id.*, *La schola cantorum, Civiltà Cattolica*, CXIII, 2 (1962) 250-253. Complete coverage will soon be published by R. KRAUTHEIMER, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae* (Vatican City), vol. III.

² Partially published in G. MATTHIAE, *S. Pietro in Vincoli* (Rome, 1960) pp. 10-20. Full coverage now in the process of publication by A. M. Colini.

from which parallel barriers reached perhaps more than half way down the nave, with a reserved area beside the sanctuary, at least in the right aisle³. These barriers, which were transferred to the new church in the twelfth century, bear the monograms of John II (533-535).

Again, in S. Stefano in Via Latina, according to Fortunati's account of the excavation, the same elements appear⁴. Here the parallel barriers reached over one third the length of the nave and the wing walls extended to the colonnades. The chancel screens, which are clearly fifth-century work, most likely belong to the original plan of the church of Pope Leo I (440-460).

Finally, we have the chancel barriers in Sta. Maria Antiqua⁵. Although the space available was more restricted, and the four great piers at the corners presented no little problem, the chancel was still made to conform in general lines to the arrangement found in S. Marco. A pair of chancel walls (this time with benches) were extended into the nave, meeting the four piers at either end; and a pair of wing walls, each with an entrance in the middle, shut off the sanctuary end of each aisle⁶. In addition, an *ambo* stood against the chancel wall on the left, a third of the way from the sanctuary. A fragment of an octagonal platform with the inscription of John VII (705-707) seems to belong to this *ambo*. This same date, moreover, would suit the paintings which adorn the chancel barriers, since their Latin inscriptions associate them with the portrait of John VII where Latin also appears.

Hence we have five fairly complete instances of the kind of chancel arrangement found in S. Marco, all presenting the same problem. Assuming that the chancel "fits" the liturgy, the rationale for this disposition of church space is to be sought in the external shape of the ritual of the Mass during this period. The

³ KRAUTHEIMER, *Corpus*, I, pl. xix.

⁴ L. FORTUNATI, *Relazione generale degli scavi e scoperte fatte lungo la Via Latina* (Rome, 1859), plan on backfold.

⁵ G. M. RUSHFORTH, *The Church of S. Maria Antiqua: Papers of the British School at Rome*, I (1902), 1-123; E. TEA, *La basilica di Santa Maria Antiqua* (Milan, 1937).

⁶ This feature, barriers with entrances, at the end of either aisle, is also found in the chancel arrangements of S. Crisogono, both in the earlier church (fourth-fifth centuries) and in the larger, second church (sixth-seventh centuries). SEE KRAUTHEIMER, *Corpus*, I, pl. xxi.

task, then, is to reconstruct the external, visible, spatial requirements of the early liturgy, that is, the rubrics of the Mass. Curiously enough, while enormous amounts of research have been devoted to establishing the text of the early Mass, attempts to picture the external performance of the Mass have been only incidental and unsure.

The fundamental document in this reconstruction must be *Ordo Romanus I*⁷, which is generally accepted as a description of the stational Mass of the seventh century in Rome. At times, however, it has been possible to conjecture beyond the seventh century to what was probably the state of affairs earlier. A comprehensive study of the early rubrics, of course, is not called for here. What we have selected is a number of problem areas in which the ceremony of the Mass, by its external ritual, would be liable to explain the spatial disposition of the early Roman chancel. These areas are four: 1, the ceremonies of pontifical entrance and exit; 2, the readings of Sacred Scripture; 3, the procession of the offertory; and 4, the procession of the communion.

PONTIFICAL ENTRANCE AND EXIT

In its mature form the pontifical entrance ceremony was not a single procession but a grand complex of processions highly organized and dramatically timed, culminating in the entrance of the Pope himself. Early in the morning, well in advance of the time set for the beginning of Mass, a representation of the clergy of Rome would set out for the designated church. The church might be yet only partially filled when their procession in orderly fashion moved down the length of the nave to their places in the apse⁸, the bishops sitting on the right and the priests on the left of the pontifical throne.

⁷ M. ANDRIEU, *Les Ordines Romani du haut moyen-âge*, II, *Les textes* = *Spicilegium sacrum lovaniense*, XXIII (Louvain, 1948).

⁸ That the apse was still the usual place for the clergy in the sixth century seems to be born out by the notice in *Liber Pontificalis* under Anastasius: «*Hic constituit ut quotiescumque evangelia sancta recitantur, sacerdotes non sederent, sed curvi starent*» (DUCHESNE, *LP*, I, 218). The smallness of the excavated apse may be responsible for the benches flanking the sanctuary in Sta. Maria Antiqua.

« Prima mane praecedit omnis clerus apostolicum ad ecclesiam ... expectantes pontificem in ecclesia sedentes in presbiterio, episcopi quidem ad sinistram intransibus, presbiteri vero in dexteram, ut, quando pontifex sederit, ad eos respiciens, episcopos ad dexteram sui, presbiteros vero ad sinistram contueatur » (*Ordo* I, 24).

At the same time a guard of honor – administrators of the parish and a number of acolytes with candles – would go out to a place designated beforehand to meet the Pope who was approaching from the Lateran.

« Sed dum venerit pontifex prope ecclesiam, exeuntes acolyti et defensores ex regione illa cuius dies ad officium fuerit in obsequio praestolantur eum in loco statuto, antequam veniat ubi discensurus est » (*Ordo* I, 25).

Arriving at the church, the Pope would retire to a *secretarium* near the entrance to prepare for Mass (*Ordo* I, 29).

Next in order, the Gospel book, after the place for reading had been marked, was solemnly brought from the *secretarium* to the altar. An acolyte carried the book, his hands covered by his chasuble. Before him went a subdeacon who, when they reached the altar, took the book and reverently placed it on it.

Acolytus defert evangelium usque ante altare, precedente eum subdiacono sequente, qui, eum de super planeta illius suscipiens, manibus suis honorifice super altare ponat (*Ordo* I, 31).

In time, a third procession was formed consisting of the cantors. These, after receiving a papal blessing, would proceed from their *secretarium* to their places before the sanctuary. Here they drew up in parallel double files on either side of the way to the altar, the boys on the inside and the men on the outside.

« Tunc illi, elevantes per ordinem, vadunt ante altare; statuuntur per ordines acies duae tantum parafonistae quidem hinc inde a foris, infantes ab utroque latere infra per ordinem » (*Ordo* I, 43).

Thus they stood forming a kind of processional way anticipating the passage of their pontiff through their midst. By now the

congregation would have filled the aisles, overflowing into the nave perhaps, but allowing an avenue of access down the middle.

Finally, the Pope himself would appear in his vestments at the far end of the nave. At this the cantors would intone a psalm, and the congregation would answer with the antiphon after each verse. On either side of the Pope walked the archdeacon and the district deacon; before him went a subdeacon swinging a thurible; and before all went the papal guard of honor – seven acolytes with candles and military standard-bearers⁹. Proceeding thus the length of the nave, these would stop short behind the cantors and divide, forming a single file on either side. Through this passage the Pope and his attendants now proceeded to the altar – an action clearly pictured in the words *per-accedens* and *per-transit*.

Tunc subdiaconus cum tymiameterio praecedit ante ipsum, mittens incensum, et septem acolyti ... portantes septem cereostata accensa praecedunt ante pontificem usque ante altare ... Tunc peraccedens, antequam veniat ad scolam, dividuntur cereostata, ad dexteram et ad sinistram et pertransit pontifex in caput scolae et inclinat caput ad altare (*Ordo* I, 46, 49).

Here the Pontiff greets the assembled clergy, prays quietly a few minutes, kisses the altar, and goes to his throne (*Ordo* I, 49-51).

At the completion of the liturgy this procession must return to the *secretarium*; and instead of the triumphal introit chant of the cantors and the people, a series of papal benedictions is given. As soon as the postcommunion oration is said, the Pope gives a signal to the deacon who announces to the faithful, *Ite, missa est*; they answer, *Deo gratias*. The procession now re-forms to take the Pope back to the *secretarium*, and as the Pope proceeds from his throne in the apse down into the nave, each class of assisting officers asks for and receives its blessing in turn.

« Tunc septem cereostata praecedunt pontificem et subdiaconus regionarius cum turibulo ad secretarium. Discedente autem illo in presbiterio, episcopi primum dicunt: Iube, domne, benedicere. Respondit: Benedicat nos dominus. Respondunt: Amen; post

⁹ Since the military appear before the acolytes in the recessional, as will be seen, it may be presumed that they went before them at the introit as well.

episcopos presbiteri, deinde monachi, deinde scola, deinde milites draconarii, id est qui signa portant; post eos baiuli; post eos cereostatarii; post quos acolyti qui rugam observant; post eos extra presbiterium cruces portantes, deinde mansionarii iuniores; et intrant in secretarium » (*Ordo*, I, 125-126).

Upon analysis, this rubric provides us with a complete catalogue of the participating hierarchy, each class in its proper place. Coming down from his throne into the presbytery proper (*in presbiterio*) the bishop blesses three groups found there: bishops, priests, and monks. The bishops and priests were mentioned in the introit procession; apparently monks, when present, joined this assembly. Passing now from the presbytery proper into the *schola* area, the Pope encounters first the cantors themselves (*scola*), then the various members of his guard of honor: standard-bearers, cross-bearers, and candle-bearers (*milites... qui signa portant, baiuli, cereostatarii*). These all fall in line before the Pope after receiving their blessing, according to the initial direction in this rubric (*praecedunt pontificem*). Behind these he meets *acolyti qui rugam observant*, that is, the acolytes who keep the gate to the altar closed after the Pope's entrance and open it before him on his return¹⁰. When he has passed by these the Pope is *extra presbiterium*, that is, outside of the last chancel barriers – the word *presbiterium* being used here in its widest sense to mean the area for all clergy, however minor. Here stand those who accompanied him from the Lateran: cross-bearers and the page boys from his own residence (*cruces portantes, mansionarii iuniores*).

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of these processions. Lights and crosses and incense and vestments must have added up to a very imposing ceremony. By contrast, moreover, with the rest of the liturgy, the ritual pomp of the entrance would lend it an enormous visual importance; for there are only two moments in the Roman liturgy of the seventh century that receive such ritual elaboration, the entry of the celebrant and the singing of

¹⁰ Ducange offers the following definition for *ruga*: « [Diximus] per Rugam videri intelligi viam in ipsa aede sacra ante presbyterium, qua in illud pergit Pontifex, sacra facturus » (*Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, rev. 1937-1938). Rather it seems to refer to a gate in the present context, as well as in a number of places in *LP*, for example: I, 464 and 478.

the gospel; and of the two, the former is far the more splendid¹¹. If we are concerned, then, with the external shape of the Roman liturgy, we must first recognize that its single, most important feature was the entrance of the Pope.

Thus the meaning of the longitudinal extension of the early Roman chancel into the nave gradually becomes clear. What has hitherto been accepted simply as a *schola cantorum* is more fundamentally a *solea* or sacred way for the solemn passage of the bishop of Rome to the altar. The two stages of the *soleae* at S. Marco and S. Pietro in Vincoli provide a perfect "fit" with the rubrics. The wider, first stage (3.55 and 4.30 m. respectively) would have accommodated the cantors who stood in double files on either side – boys on the inside and men on the outside; the narrower, second stage (2.90 and 3.30 m.) would have accommodated a single file of acolytes on either side, still leaving ample room for the passage of the Pope and his assistants.

A great number of factors must have contributed to the evolution of this rite. The eclipse of the imperial administrators in Rome by the authority of the Pope certainly enters in¹². Yet it should be observed that the ceremony is not exclusively a Roman development, for Hanssens has already remarked the similarity between Roman and oriental rites in this regard¹³. What in the Byzantine rite is called the lesser entrance was in origin the ceremony of the bishop's entrance into the church where he was to celebrate the liturgy, a ceremony common to the entire orient¹⁴. Both the name lesser "entrance" and the accompanying prayer for the entering ministers¹⁵ bear witness to the earlier ceremony. Direct testimony to it, moreover, is had, among other places, in the Council of Laodicea (363) and in the sermons of St. John

¹¹ E. BISHOP, *Liturgica historica* (Oxford, 1918), 9.

¹² J. JUNGSMANN, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, trans. Francis A. Brunner, I (New York, 1951) 59.

¹³ I. M. HANSENS, *Institutiones liturgicae de ritibus orientalibus*, tome 2: *De missa rituum orientalium*, III (Rome, 1930, 1932) 105.

¹⁴ « Congruit plane hodiernus ritus minoris ingressus cum ritu illo, totius Orientis communi, quo antiquitus episcopus, qui missam celebraturus erat, sollemniter per ecclesiam ad sanctuarium seu ad altare deducebatur ». HANSENS, *op. cit.*, III, 104.

¹⁵ See entrance prayer of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, F. E. BRIGHTMAN, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, I (Oxford, 1896) 312 b, lines 15 ff.

Chrysostom (before 407)¹⁶. The ceremony was not assimilated into the procession of the Gospel until the eighth century¹⁷.

The antiquity of this ritual in Rome can be traced parallel to the evolution of the episcopal attributes in the early Church. The transfer of imperial insignia to the episcopacy has been observed to follow close on the heels of the Constantinian Peace¹⁸. As early as 314 Constantine refers to bishops as *gloriosissimi*, a title reserved for praetorian rank, and in 318 he officially invests them with the praetor's power of civil jurisprudence¹⁹. The praetor ranks as colleague not only of other praetors but of consuls as well, and his power is not *potestas* but *imperium*²⁰. It is natural, then, for Constantine to refer to the bishops assembled at Nicea as his "brothers"²¹; the praetor is an emperor in miniature. In the tribunal the praetor is privileged to sit on the *sella curulis*, while the plaintiffs stand. At his service stand messengers, officers to arrest, *praecones* to announce the cases, and, most conspicuous, an honor guard of lictors²². In the late empire this guard becomes a guard of torchbearers²³, an honor formerly reserved to the emperor himself²⁴. Very soon after the Peace, therefore, a guard of honor could be expected to be found accompanying the Pope as an honor belonging to his newly-acquired civil office.

It is not impossible either that the origin of the pontifical honor guard reaches back to pre-Constantinian times. In the biography of Pope Lucius (253-254), the sixth-century author has left us the following note:

¹⁶ BRIGHTMAN, *op. cit.*, Appendix M: «The Liturgy of Asia from the Canons of Laodicea», 518-521; Appendix O: «The Byzantine Liturgy before the seventh Century», 527-534. For other references to the entrance in eastern rites see HANSSENS, *op. cit.*, II, 432, 440, 446, 448, 449, 466.

¹⁷ HANSSENS, II, 449.

¹⁸ TH. KLAUSER, *Der Ursprung der bischöflichen Insignien und Ehrenrechte = Bonner akademische Reden*, I (Bonn, 1948).

¹⁹ KLAUSER, *Insignien*, 13-14. That this was more than a «paper» jurisdiction is clear from repeated complaints of Ambrose and Augustine of the heavy burden of civil cases before them.

²⁰ PAULY-WISSOWA, 22-2 (1954), 1588.

²¹ KLAUSER, *Insignien*, 26.

²² PAULY-WISSOWA, 22-2, 1599 and 1589.

²³ A. CROEGAERT, *Les rites et prières du saint sacrifice de la messe*, I (2nd ed.; Malines, 1948) 562-563.

²⁴ A. ALFÖLDI, *Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells am römischen Kaiserhofe: Römische Mitteilungen*, XLIX (1934) 111.

« Hic praecepit ut duo presbiteri et tres diaconi in omni loco episcopum non desererent, propter testimonium ecclesiasticum » (*L. P.*, I, p. 153).

Though chronology is not the author's strong point, the note itself contains an intrinsic indication of great antiquity (and hence authenticity) in that it assigns to the bishop a guard of *presbiteri* and *diaconi* at a time when the author himself would be accustomed to seeing this function assigned rather to acolytes and subdeacons. According to C. H. Turner, it was in the middle of the third century when subdeacons and acolytes assumed the duties formerly assigned to deacons as the personal and secretarial staff of the bishop²⁵. If this be allowed, the development of the bishop's honor guard may parallel the development of another of his attributes, the *cathedra*. As the sacred seat of the bishop, to which there is frequent reference in the second and third centuries, takes on in Constantinian times the properties of an imperial throne²⁶; so his personal bodyguard assumes the character of an imperial guard appropriate to his newly acquired status as *magistratus* and brother to the emperor.

Whether or not the ceremony of the episcopal entrance had developed at Rome before the Peace²⁷, it was probably not much later than it. The subsequent introduction of cantors into the *solea* area, which Schuster places in the fifth century, is simply a further effort at embellishing the solemn, pontifical entrance²⁸. Schuster associates their introduction with the origin of the introit psalm which the *Liber Pontificalis* records under Caelestinus (422-432):

« Hic multa constituta fecit et constituit ut psalmi David CL ante sacrificium psalli antephanatim ex omnibus, quod ante non fiebat, nisi tantum epistula beati Pauli recitabatur et sanctum Evangelium » (*L. P.*, I, p. 230).

²⁵ C. H. TURNER, « The Organization of the Church »: *Cambridge Med. Hist.*, I (1936) 150.

²⁶ E. STOMMEL, *Die bischöfliche Kathedra in christliche Altertum: Münchener theolog. Zeitschrift*, III (1951) 17-32.

²⁷ Kirsch places the origin of the Roman stational service in pre-Constantinian times in the third century; whether or not this is sound, there was certainly opportunity for the development of an entrance ceremony before the Peace. J. P. KIRSCH, *L'origine des stations: Ephemerides liturgicae*, XLI (1927) 145.

²⁸ I. SCHUSTER, *The Sacramentary* (trans. A. Levelis-Marke, London, 1924) 79.

One easily sees in this development, especially in the antiphonal mode of the chant, a reflection of the *acclamatio* with which the Roman Senate greeted the entrance of their Emperor. This practice started as early as Augustus and became more and more formalized as successive emperors claimed more and more absolute divinity, until by the third century it had developed into a kind of litany²⁹. The transfer of this manner of formal greeting to the entrance of the bishop was only a natural development. When Pope Vigilius (537-555) entered Constantinople, the people went before him chanting the messianic psalm *Ecce advenit dominator dominus* all the the way to Hagia Sophia³⁰.

Hence the organization of the cantors into a *schola* is really a further elaboration of the entrance ceremony; the cantors belong in the area of the *solea* as an ornament of the bishop's passage. Their position in the seventh-century rubric in double parallel files before the altar underscores their connection with the Pope's honor guard of acolytes who stand in parallel files behind them. Both make up a living *via sacra* to honor the sacred person who stands in place of Christ.

How important was this emphasis on the procession in determining not just the lines of the chancel but the longitudinal lines of the Early Christian basilica itself, one can only speculate³¹. Certainly the longitudinal character of the Christian basilica was one of its most original ideas. As Forsyth observed, "the average [pagan] basilica did not have an emphatic longitudinal and processional character. It often lay along the flank of a forum and was entered from the side, and its aisles were apt to surround the

²⁹ ALFÖLDI, *Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells*, 79-82; W. ENSSLIN, *The Court and its Ceremonial: Cambridge Anc. Hist.*, XII (1939) 366.

³⁰ *LP*, I, 297-298.

³¹ The converse theory, that is, that the liturgical development was suggested by the processional character of the basilica, is also possible, and this is the view Jungmann adopts. « To understand this later [i.e. fifth-century] development we must call to mind the conditions that evolved in the era of Constantine the Great. Basilicas were built of such magnitude and magnificence that they almost compelled a similar embellishment of the services. This held true especially of the divine services conducted by the Pope himself, and in particular of the stational service on feast days. The Pope already had a considerable retinue, and it seemed only fitting that when he came to worship his coming would be distinguished with suitable formality. Thus arose the solemn entry or *introitus* at the beginning of the service. » *The Early Liturgy* (Nôtre Dame, 1959) 291-292.

entire interior in such a way as to produce a concentric effect ”³². Moreover, the discovery that the transept is a later alteration both at S. Maria Maggiore and at the Lateran serves to emphasize the processional character of the basilica. The more usual “type” of the primitive Christian basilica is simply a nave flanked by aisles. In this picture there is no architectural division separating the sanctuary from the nave; the sanctuary is in the nave, toward one end of it, bounded simply by chancel barriers. The nave is the grand processional corridor for the hierarchy on their way to their sacred employment; the congregation area is chiefly in the aisles.

THE SCRIPTURAL READINGS

The ceremonies of the reading of Sacred Scripture do not admit of any complete reconstruction. *Ordo* I describes the reading of the lesson in the following simple rubric:

« Subdiaconus vero qui lecturus est, mox ut viderit post pontificem episcopos vel presbiteros resedentes, ascendit in ambonem et legit » (*Ordo*, I, 56).

The subdeacon waits until he sees that the Pope and the subordinate clergy are seated, then he ascends the *ambo* and reads.

The Gospel is a more elaborate affair. After asking the blessing of the Pope, the deacon goes and takes up the Gospel from the altar, where it had been placed in the entrance ceremony. Then a miniature procession forms to lead him to the *ambo*.

« Procedunt ante ipsum duo subdiaconi regionarii levantes tymiamaterium de manu subdiaconi sequentis, mittentes incensum, et ante se habentes duos acolytos portantes duo cereostata; venientes ad ambonem dividuntur ipsi acolyti » (*Ordo* I, 59).

Two acolytes with candles and two subdeacons with incense precede the deacon to the *ambo*; at the *ambo* they divide and he ascends with one of the subdeacons. When he has finished reading, the

³² G. H. FORSYTH, *The Transept of Old St. Peter's at Rome: Late Classical and Med. Studies in Honor of A. M. Friend* (Princeton, 1955) 68.

subdeacon takes the book back and hands it to the subdeacon standing below him; the latter carries the book to the clergy who kiss it in order.

« Descendente autem diacono, subdiaconus qui prius aperuerat, recipit evangelium et porrigit eum subdiacono sequenti, qui in filo stat; quod tenens ante pectus suum super planetam porrigit osculandum omnibus per ordinem graduum » (*Ordo* I, 64).

This last phrase, *per ordinem graduum*, clearly does not refer to the stairs of the *ambo*, as Croegaert supposed³³, but to the "grades" of the clergy. A later recension of the *Ordo* expands the clause to read: "porrigit osculandum primum episcopo aut presbitero, deinde omnibus per ordinem graduum qui steterint" (*Ordo* V, 38).

Ordo Romanus I leaves many questions unanswered concerning the Gospel rite in the seventh century. However, starting with a later text, both Jungmann and Croegaert, taking their lead from an article by Beauduin, have tried to reconstruct the space-dispositions involved in the seventh and even earlier centuries³⁴. The rubric cited reads:

« Ipse vero diaconus stat versus ad meridiem, ad quam partem viri solent confluere, alias autem ad septentrionem » (*Ordo* V, 36).

From this they argue with some ingenuity that we have here a reflection of the primitive occidented church arrangement wherein the deacon proceeded to the bishop's right (his more honorable side) and faced north (so as to turn his back on the least number of people)³⁵. But the argument is tenuous at best, the archeological evidence certainly not confirmatory³⁶, and the text itself a

³³ CROEGAERT, *Les rites*, I, 572.

³⁴ L. BEAUDUIN, *Pourquoi ces différents endroits pour la lecture de l'épître et de l'évangile? : Questions liturgiques et paroissiales*, IV (1913-1914) 314-320; JUNGMAUN, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, I, 414-417; CROEGAERT, *Les rites*, I, 564-569.

³⁵ See figure 4 from Beauduin, from which Jungmann and Croegaert borrow their diagrams. Both of the latter have considerably simplified Beauduin's study. Beauduin offers an impossible complication of fourteen different positions for the reader, variously justified depending on what frame of reference is used in reading directions (i.e., whether it be the points of the compass, the *cathedra*, or the altar facing the congregation or facing the apse).

³⁶ Jungmann (I, 417) refers to this as a reconstruction from "archeological evidences;" he cites St. Peter's, Sta. Maria Maggiore and S. Clemente as occidented churches where the

very insecure starting place. Both Jungmann and Andrieu agree in assigning the text a mid-ninth-century origin north of the Alps ³⁷.

Returning, then, to the information supplied by *Ordo* I for the seventh-century ceremony, we should first observe that mention is made of only one *ambo*. "Even in the early Middle Ages there was, as a rule, but one *ambo*, which served for all the lessons" ³⁸. Secondly, the only possible indication given about the location of this *ambo* is that the subdeacon, who receives the book after the reading, is standing *in filo* (*Ordo* I, 64), which seems to refer to the *solea* ³⁹. At Sta. Maria Antiqua the eighth-century *ambo* stood on the left (Gospel) chancel barrier. The procession requires that it be some distance from the altar ⁴⁰. It may even have stood outside the chancel area entirely at the end of the *solea*, as it did in the Byzantine arrangement ⁴¹.

It is not known when the Gospel procession first came into use in Rome, nor when the *ambo* was first introduced. When St. Jerome refers to the Gospel procession in the East, he feels he must explain to his Roman audience what he means.

« Nam et absque martyrum reliquiis per totas Orientis Ecclesias, quando legendum est Evangelium, accenduntur luminaria, iam sole rutilante: non utique ad fugendas tenebras, sed ad signum laetitiae demonstrandum » ⁴².

Hence the custom of accompanying the book with candles was certainly not known in Rome at the beginning of the fifth century (406).

deacon ascended an *ambo* on the bishop's right and faced north (p. 415, n. 74), but this is clearly hypothesis, not evidence. Beauduin assumes that the *ambo* in S. Clemente is early Christian; also that the oriented church was not introduced until after the rubrics for the occidented church had become fixed in the liturgical texts (p. 317).

³⁷ JUNGSMANN, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, I, 414; ANDRIEU, *Les ordines romani*, II, 205.

³⁸ JUNGSMANN, I, 417.

³⁹ *Ordo* IV, 27, reads: "Legitur lectio a subdiacono in ambone, stans in medium de scola, aut acolitus." But this locus is corrupt, besides being ninth-century.

⁴⁰ It could not conceivably have been on the steps of the altar as Cabrol had supposed. F. CABROL, *Mass of the Western Rites* (trans. C. M. Antony, London, 1934) 55.

⁴¹ G. A. SOTERIOU, "Αἱ παλαιοχριστιανικαὶ βασιλικαὶ τῆς Ἑλλάδος": Ἀρχαιολογικὴ Ἐφημερίς (1929) 244; St. G. XYDIS, *The Chancel Barrier, Solea, and Ambo of Hagia Sophia: Art Bulletin*, XXIX (1947) 13-14, figs. 32-33.

⁴² JEROME, *Contra Vigilantium* (PL, 23, 361).

Although negative evidence is not very satisfying in this area, it is remarkable that no one has yet found in the Fathers any clear reference to the *ambo* at Rome in Early Christian times ⁴³. In the African church, both Augustine and Cyprian refer to *pulpitum* and *tribunale* by name ⁴⁴. At Rome the reference that comes nearest to supplying the desired information is Augustine's story of the conversion of Victorinus and his profession of faith at Rome "*de loco eminentiore in conspectu populi fidelis*" ⁴⁵. But the story is told at second hand as related by Simplicianus of Milan; and even at that, it may refer merely to the steps of the presbytery. Rufinus of Aquileia (before 410) describes the Roman ceremony of the profession of faith as simply "*fidelium populo audiente, symbolum reddere*" ⁴⁶.

It is likewise remarkable that the homily or sermon is practically unknown in the early church at Rome ⁴⁷. *Ordo* I makes no provision for it at all. Sozomenus (before 450) tells us explicitly, apparently because he finds it unusual, that at Rome neither the bishop nor any other preaches in church ⁴⁸. "The homily appears to have fallen into disuse at Rome at a somewhat early period. St. Gregory, and St. Leo before him, were the only early Popes who left homilies behind them, or, indeed, seem, as far as we know, to have preached them. The homilies of St. Leo are, moreover, short and restricted to certain solemn festivals. Roman priests had no authority to preach, and the Popes looked askance at the permission to do so granted to their clergy by other bishops" ⁴⁹. For the exceptional sermon the Pope might well have used the *cathedra* or its steps instead of an *ambo* ⁵⁰.

A certain amount of awkwardness in the way the Gospel ceremony is performed in *Ordo* I is a possible indication that the *ambo*

⁴³ Cf. H. LECLERCQ, *Ambon: DACL*, I, 1330-1347; A. M. SCHNEIDER, *Ambon: Reallexikon für Antike u. Christentum*, I, 363-365.

⁴⁴ AUGUSTINE, *Serm.* 23, 1 (*PL*, 38, 155); *De civ. Dei*, 22, 8 (*CSEL*, 40-2, 611); CYPRIAN, *Epist.* 38, 2 and 39, 4 (*CSEL*, 3, 581 and 583).

⁴⁵ AUGUSTINE, *Conf.*, 8, 2 (*PL*, 32, 751).

⁴⁶ RUFINUS, *Comment. in Symbol. Apost.*, 5 (*PL*, 21, 339).

⁴⁷ JUNGSMANN, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, I, 457.

⁴⁸ SOZOMENUS, *Hist. eccl.*, 7, 22 (*PG*, 67, 1476).

⁴⁹ L. DUCHESNE, *Christian Worship* (trans M. L. McClure; 4th ed.; London, 1912) 171.

⁵⁰ JUNGSMANN, I, 459.

was introduced at Rome only after the procession of the Gospel had had time to develop. Ceremonially it is not completely satisfactory that after thethurifers and candlebearers have escorted the Gospel to the *ambo* they should, by reason of the narrowness of the place, have to let their sacred charge escape while it is being read. Moreover, having ascended the *ambo*, the deacon does not use it as an *ambo*, that is as a lectern, but instead rests the book on the subdeacon's arm, as indeed is the custom today. This is explicitly indicated in a later version of the rubric: "*porrigit ei subdiaconus... brachio sinistro et recumbit super eum diaconus aevangelium usquedum custodit signum*" (*Ordo* IV, 31). And the same is implied in *Ordo* I: "*Subdiaconus qui prius aperuerat, recipit evangelium*" (*Ordo* I, 64). Besides being a way of showing honor to the book, this may well be a remnant of how the ceremony was performed before the *ambo* was introduced.

In summary, it is not possible to say precisely how the Gospel ceremony affected the chancel arrangement at Rome. The Gospel procession did not exist there earlier than the middle of the fifth century; nor is there any evidence to prove the existence of the *ambo* at Rome before the seventh century. It may be that they are both Byzantine imports; elsewhere the erection of *ambos* follows closely the spread of the Byzantine liturgy⁵¹.

THE OFFERTORY AND COMMUNION PROCESSIONS

Because the ceremonies of the offertory and the communion are described in much the same terms in *Ordo* I, and have occasioned the same kinds of difficulties to the liturgists interpreting them, it seems best to handle the two together. The rubrics given are somewhat involved, but the problem that concerns us here is simple, that is, where did these ceremonies take place and what kind of chancel arrangement would they require. From parallel instances the liturgist would expect them to take place within the sanctuary or at the sanctuary barrier; yet the *Ordo* directs the

⁵¹ For example, Ward Perkins observes that prior to the sixth century the *ambo* does not occur anywhere in North Africa, but it is found in all three of the sixth-century churches of Tripolitania. J. B. WARD PERKINS and R. G. GOODCHILD, *The Christian Antiquities of Tripolitania: Archaeologia*, XCV (1953), 65.

clergy to go down into the *senatorium* and into the *partes mulierum* for these ceremonies. Hence some liturgists have been lead to imagine that the clergy circulate among the faithful to collect their offerings and to distribute the Holy Eucharist. The possibility of a third alternative has not yet been fully examined.

After the altar has been covered with the *corporale*, a subdeacon comes forward with the chalice (*Ordo* I, 67-68). The Pope then leaves his *cathedra* and goes to the *senatorium* to receive the offerings of the men of nobility, according to rank. In all of these ceremonies he is assisted on either hand by two of his guard of honor who keep his copious vestments from interfering with his freedom of movement.

« Pontifex autem descendit ad senatorium, tenente manum eius dexteram primicerio notariorum et primicerio defensorum sinistram, et suscipit oblationes principum per ordinem archium » (*Ordo* I, 69).

Each one offers an *amula*, or a little bottle of wine, and a small loaf of bread. The Pope passes the *amula* to the archdeacon who pours it into the chalice; when full, the chalice is emptied into a larger container, the *scyphus* (*sciffus*), held by an acolyte. The offering of bread the Pope passes to a subdeacon who places it in a linen held by two acolytes (*Ordo* I, 70-71). When he has received the offerings of the men of nobility, the Pope is relieved at his task by one of the bishops. Whereupon the Pope crosses over in *partem mulierum* to perform the same office there.

« Reliquas oblationes post pontificem suscipit episcopus ebdomadarius, ut ipse manu sua mittat eas in sindone qui eum sequitur ... Pontifex vero, antequam transeat in partem mulierum, descendit ante confessionem et suscipit oblatas primicerii et secundicerii et primicerii defensorum: nam in diebus festis post diaconos ad altare offerunt. Similiter ascendens pontifex in partem feminarum ordine quo supra omnia explet » (*Ordo* I, 72, 74, 75).

This rubric comes closer than any other to telling us where the offering was done, for on the way from the *senatorium* to the *pars mulierum* the Pope stops before the *confessio* to receive the offerings of the parish administrators. Since the *confessio*, in those churches

that had one at this date, would be located just before or below the altar (*ad altare*), the *senatorium* and the *pars mulierum* seem to lie in the near vicinity of the sanctuary on either side. But the directions are not precise enough to justify this conclusion with confidence.

When he has received the offerings of the women of nobility, the Pope retires to his seat where he washes his hands and waits for the gifts to be arranged on the altar. When all is ready and the Eucharistic offerings have been selected from the rest, he returns to the altar to begin the canon of the Mass (*Ordo* I, 76-82). From this point until the confection, that is, throughout the most solemn part of the Mass, all is done with the least external ceremony.

The major clergy again take their seats in the apse for the confection, that is, the division of the Eucharistic Bread for reception by the faithful. The Pope then receives Communion himself in his *cathedra*; and the bishops and priests, in order of dignity, approach the Pope to receive from him the Eucharistic Bread. The first bishop receives the chalice from the archdeacon at the altar and himself administers it to the clergy who follow. Meanwhile the archdeacon announces to the faithful the station for the following week.

« Deinde venit archidiaconus cum calice ad cornu altaris et adnuntiat stationem et refuso parum de calice in sciffo inter manus acolyti, accedunt primum episcopi ad sedem ut communicent de manu pontificis secundum ordinem. Sed et presbiteri ascendant ut communicent. Episcopus autem primus accipit calicem de manu archidiaconi et stat in cornu altaris sequentis ordinis usque ad primicerium defensorum » (*Ordo* I, 108-110).

The consecrated Wine remaining is now poured into the *scyphus* of unconsecrated wine from which the people will communicate (the *inmixtio*).

The rite of distributing Communion to the faithful is parallel to the offertory rite. The Pope distributes the Eucharistic Bread and the archdeacon the Wine, first to the men of rank, then to the noblewomen. Bishops, assisted by deacons, perform the same office for the rest of the men; priests, assisted by deacons, for the rest of the women.

« Qui [i. e. episcopus] dum confirmaverit, id est quos papa communicat, descendit pontifex a sede, cum primicerio notariorum et primicerio defensorum, ut communicet eos qui in senatorio sunt, post quem archidiaconus confirmat. Post archidiaconem episcopi communicant populum, annuente eis primicerio cum manu sub planeta percontato pontifici; post eos diaconi donfirmant. Deinde transeunt in parte sinistra et faciunt similiter. Presbyteri autem, annuente primicerio, iussu pontificis communicant populum [i. e. mulieres] et ipsi vicissim confirmant » (*Ordo* I, 113-116).

The Pope then returns to his *cathedra* where he communicates the minor clergy – his honor guard, the *schola*, and the acolytes. All this while the *schola* has been chanting the the communion psalm (*Ordo* I, 117-119).

The problem of locating the offertory and communion rites in relation to the sanctuary has troubled liturgists from the start. Cardinal Bona could not decide whether they were carried out within the sanctuary barrier or outside; although he never had any doubt that the faithful brought their gifts up to the sanctuary area and approached again for Communion⁵². Edmund Bishop, however, maintained that there was no offertory procession at all, but the celebrant went down among the faithful to collect the offerings⁵³. This has been Jungmann's thesis as well. Only outside of Rome did a procession of the faithful take place. At Rome "the gifts were not brought by the people to the altar, but were collected by the celebrant and his retinue"⁵⁴. For Communion the faithful remained in their places and the clergy brought the Sacrament to them. "The same [procedure as at the offertory] is repeated at the end of the Mass, at the communion. The faithful approach for communion or else, as we gather from a narrative in the life of St. Benedict, the communicants remain at their places and the deacon calls out: *Si quis non communicat, det locum...* then the celebrant and his assistants come and distribute Communion under both kinds to those who remain"⁵⁵.

Fortescue presents us with a pair of alternatives in discussing the communion rite: "Lay people received outside the sanctuary,

⁵² J. BONA, *Rerum liturgicarum libri duo* (Paris, 1672) 398-400, 489-491.

⁵³ BISHOP, *Liturgica historica*, 10.

⁵⁴ JUNGMAN, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, II, 6-7; see also *Early Liturgy*, 171.

⁵⁵ JUNGMAN, *Early Liturgy*, 299; see also *Mass of the Roman Rite*, II, 374.

either at the rails or in their places" ⁵⁶. In the offertory ceremony, however, he believed Rome managed to preserve the primitive custom of the procession of the faithful ⁵⁷. Dix likewise believed strongly in the procession of the offertory, but the ceremony he describes is found neither in *Ordo* I, nor anywhere else ⁵⁸. Duchesne by-passes the problem completely ⁵⁹. According to Croegaert, the Pope does not leave the sanctuary, but simply goes *toward* the *senatorium*, or *toward* the *matroneum*, where he receives the offerings at the barrier ⁶⁰. Again, the *Ordo* hardly warrants this interpretation.

At the outset, it must be admitted that there exists no single, unequivocal testimony that would decide the problem without room for cavil. But all the probabilities involved add up to something very near a certainty. In the first place, it is curious that none of the liturgists who imagine the offertory and communion taking place in the aisles of the church have tried to picture for us how this would look. This is a matter of practicality, but the liturgy must be workable before it is anything else. For the Pontiff to receive the offerings of a single member of the congregation at least eight ministers are involved: the Pope, his two assistants, the archdeacon with the chalice, the acolyte with the *scyphus*, the subdeacon who receives the bread, and the two acolytes holding the linen. The practical impossibility of such a group threading their way through the congregation carrying chalices and loaves ought to be conclusive enough. Again, regarding the communion ceremony, the fact that not until the ninth century was the Eucharistic Bread reduced to the convenient form of a wafer, and not until the twelfth century or later was the chalice refused to the laity, would make this equally awkward if the clergy had to go to the laity instead of the laity approaching them to receive. The delicate rite of administering the copious *scyphus* through a tube of precious metal (*pugilaris*), or of distributing the Eucharistic Bread from the *sacculae* held by the acolytes into the cupped hands

⁵⁶ A. FORTESCUE, *The Mass. A Study of the Roman Liturgy* (2nd ed.; London, 1937) 374.

⁵⁷ FORTESCUE, 296-299.

⁵⁸ G. DIX, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (2nd ed.; Glasgow, 1945) 120.

⁵⁹ DUCHESNE, *Christian Worship*, 173, 186-187.

⁶⁰ CROEGAERT, *Les rites*, II, 252.

of the communicant, could hardly have been carried out in the aisles without serious danger of dropping or spilling the sacred species. The great number of communicants would serve to complicate the problem. "Where the upheavals in the structure of liturgical prayer were least violent, namely in Rome, the ancient traditions of a frequent Communion... continued the longest" ⁶¹.

Aside from the question of practicality, there is also a matter of propriety involved in all of this. In correct ceremonial the lesser in rank should come forward to meet the greater, not the other way around. This would be valid both in the presentation of gifts and in the reception of the Sacrament. It is generally admitted that the faithful brought up their gifts for the offertory elsewhere in the West; the references of Cyprian and Augustine are well known ⁶². In addition, the reception of the Sacrament is an action that is commonly spoken of as an "approach" to the Sacrament. Ambrose refers to it thus a number of times: *Ergo venisti ad altare, accepisti corpus Christi* ⁶³. Closer to Rome, St. Benedict in his Rule prescribes the order in which his monks are to approach Communion: *Sic accedant ad pacem, ad communionem* ⁶⁴. Finally, in *Ordo I* the custom prescribed in the communion of all the clergy should be noted. The Pope does not circulate through the presbytery to distribute the Sacrament but sits in his throne, and the clergy approach, *accedunt, ascendunt* (*Ordo I*, 108, 109, 118, 119). No precedent has yet been proposed for the inversion of this order, either at Rome or elsewhere. The announcement of the deacon, quoted above by Jungmann, *Si quis non communicat, det locum* ⁶⁵, need not mean that they are to make way for the clergy; it can just as easily mean that they are to make way for those who are to receive, that they may approach.

In brief, the clergy did not circulate among the laity for the

⁶¹ JUNGSMANN, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, II, 363. The author refers us to Bede's statement that at Rome they saw a great number (*innumeri*) of Christians of every age going to Communion each Sunday. *Epist. ad Egbertum*, II (*PL*, 94, 666).

⁶² JUNGSMANN, II, 1-7.

⁶³ AMBROSE, *De sacramentis* V, 3, 12 and 14 (*CSEL*, 73, 63). Cf. also CYRIL of Jerusalem, *Catech. myst.*, V, 21, 22 (*PG*, 33, 1125) where he urges the faithful to "approach".

⁶⁴ BENEDICT, *Reg.*, cap. 63 (*PL*, 66, 871).

⁶⁵ GREGORY, *Dialogi*, 2, 23 (*PL*, 66, 178f).

offertory and the communion; nor did they simply go to the barrier of the sanctuary. Hence the *senatorium* and the *matroneum* (*pars mulierum*) must be interpreted not as the congregation areas of men and women, but as areas adjacent to the sanctuary wherein clergy and lay met for the ceremonies of offertory and communion.

Even without the benefit of the archeological evidence for such areas, Eisenhofer presumed their existence, and placed these areas in the furthest part of either aisle: "Hiernach begab sich der Papst, begleitet von zwei primicerii, von seinem in der Apsis stehenden Throne herab in den vordesten Teil des Schiffes und nahm in sog. *Senatorium* die... Opferbrote der 'vornehmen Römer' (*principum*), dann in sog. *Matroneum* die der 'vornehmen Frauen' und Nonnen in Empfang" ⁶⁶.

The wing walls which reach from the sanctuary into the aisles in the five churches above must have been meant for just this purpose, to set aside an area which is associated both with the sanctuary and with the congregation ⁶⁷. Entrances would be provided both to the sanctuary and to the aisles, as at Sta. Maria Antiqua. The clergy would come down from the sanctuary and stand here to receive the offerings and to distribute Communion. Here the faithful would enter to present their gifts and to receive the Sacrament. If the aisles are to be looked upon as the principal congregation areas, the convenience of locating *senatorium* and *matroneum* at the head of either aisle is obvious. The solution is a very simple adaption of chancel space to an eminently practical, liturgical need.

The existence of these wing-barriers at S. Stefano in Via Latina in the middle of the fifth century indicates that this arrangement was known approximately a century and a quarter after the Peace. Thus the evolution toward this solution was fairly rapid, and

⁶⁶ L. EISENHOFER, *Handbuch der katholischen Liturgik*, II (Freiburg i. Br., 1912) 124.

⁶⁷ In Sta. Maria Antiqua, Grüneisen had made a similar suggestion; but the *pars mulierum* he located on the right, and the *solea-schola* he identified as the *senatorium* (W. DE GRÜNEISEN, *Sainte Marie Antique* [Rome, 1911] 456). If the directions of *Ordo I* are followed, we must locate the *senatorium* on the right (Epistle) side, the *matroneum* on the left. It is assumed that in an occidented church the two would be reversed; in St. Peter's an inscription has made it clear that the left was the men's side of the church (H. SELHORST, *Die Platzordnung im Gläubigenraum der altchristlichen Kirche* [Diss., Münster, 1931] 27; Cf. DIEHL, *I.C.L.V.*, n. 2127).

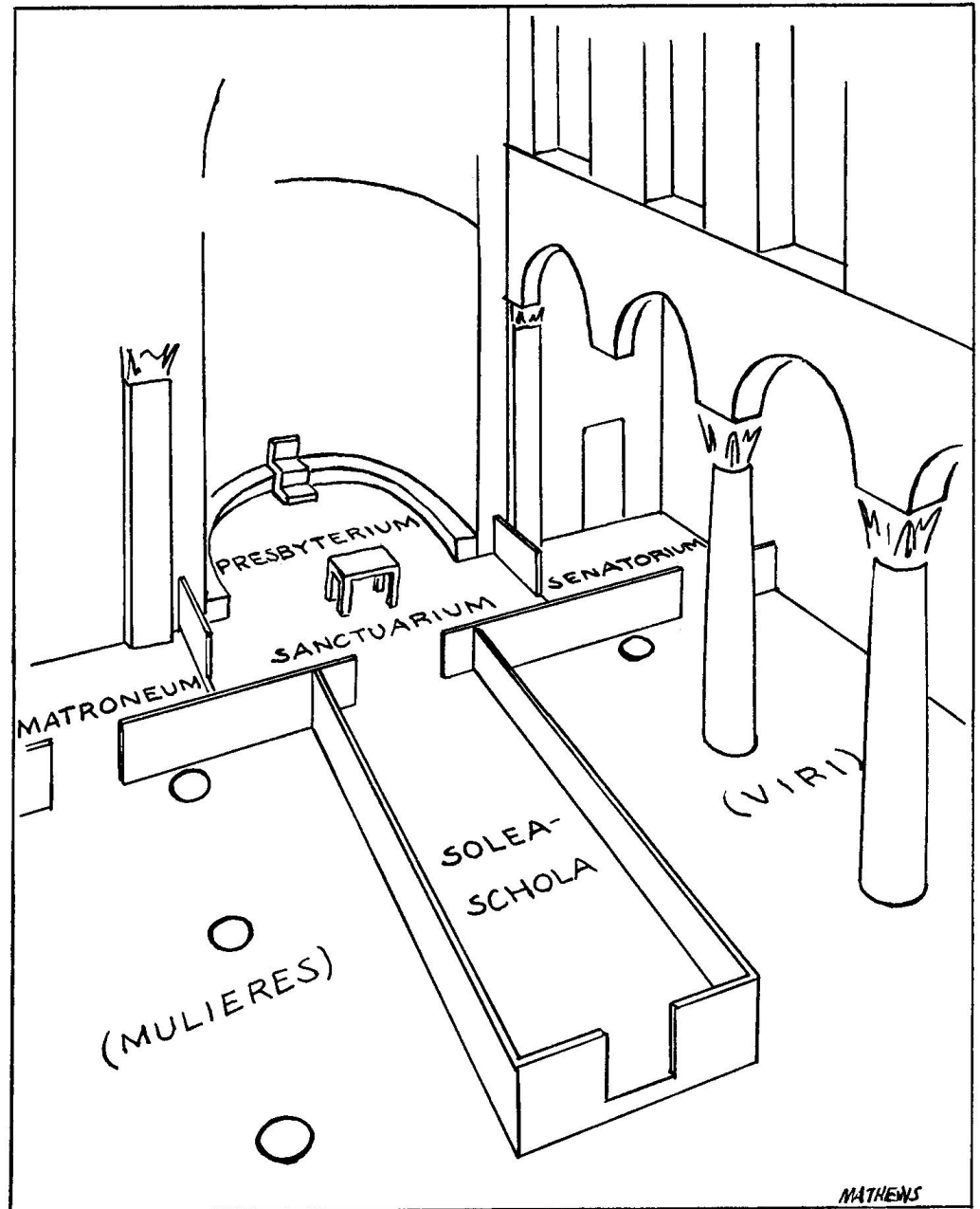
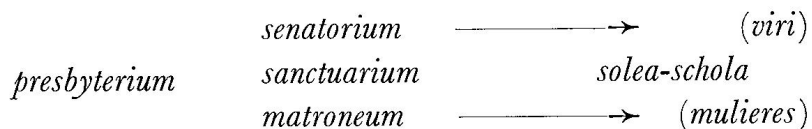


Fig. 1

whatever arrangements preceded this were already out-moded by the development of the liturgy. The survival of this arrangement down to the ninth century at S. Marco, Sta. Maria Antiqua and S. Stefano in Via Latina, and even later at S. Clemente, is an indication of how satisfactory it proved to be.

By way of resumé, the chancel arrangement we have tried to establish may be summarized in the following scheme (fig. 1):



The presbytery was located in the apse; in front of this a set of barriers marked off a rectangular sanctuary for the altar site; in front of this a pair of walls reached into the nave to enclose a processional area (*solea-schola*) which figured principally in the ceremonies of pontifical entrance and exit, but was also connected with the reading of Scripture; either side of the sanctuary a barrier set off areas for the presentation of gifts in the offertory procession and for the reception of the Eucharist (*senatorium* and *matroneum*).

THOMAS F. MATHEWS, S. I.